

hundred credits from the base layer and one thousand credits from the "Z" layer the player may be informed that he won eleven hundred credits.

[0108] In another multi-layer win evaluation method, one or more "Z" layers may extend a base layer as illustrated in FIG. 23. In this example, traditional 5×3 base layer symbols 2302 are extended to a 10×3 reel layout by adding "Z" layer symbols 2304. As a result, new win evaluation methods such as six of a kind, seven of a kind, eight of a kind, nine of a kind, and ten of a kind are possible. Of course, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that any number of layers and n-kind extensions are possible. As a result, extremely large prizes are possible for players wishing to gamble at higher levels. In this embodiment, both layers may be viewed simultaneously by overlaying "Z" layer symbols 2304 inside of base layer symbols 2302. Specifically, a portion of a base layer symbol 2302 may be obstructed by a relatively smaller version of a "Z" layer symbol 2304. Optionally, the overlaid "Z" layer symbols 2304 may be semi-transparent.

[0109] In yet another multi-layer win evaluation method, one or more "Z" layers may interact with the base layer. For example, if a five of a kind win occurs on the base layer, one additional occurrence of the same symbol on the "Z" layer may be used to multiply the five of a kind payout by two. Two additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by three. Three additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by four. Four additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by five. Five additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by six. In the same embodiment, one additional occurrence of the same symbol on the "Z" layer may be used to turn a four of a kind win on the base layer into a five of a kind win. Two additional occurrences may be used to turn a four of a kind win on the base layer into a five of a kind win and multiply the five of a kind win by two. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that this scheme may be easily extended to additional combinations of base layer wins and "Z" add-ons. For example, as shown in FIG. 24, a three of a kind scatter win 2402 on the base layer 1604 with four additional scatter symbols 2406 on the "Z" layer 2302 may result in a five of a kind win multiplied by three.

[0110] A symbolic representation of additional "Z" layer win evaluation methods is illustrated in FIG. 25. In this example, three "Z" layer win evaluation methods are shown. A three of a kind win 1602 in the "Z" dimension is shown. In some embodiments, this type of three of a kind win 2502 may require a "special modifier symbol." A special modifier symbol is a symbol which transforms one or more underlying symbols into substitute symbols and/or scatter symbols. A four of a kind win 2504 in the "Z" dimension, and a two of a kind win 2506 in the "Z" dimension are also shown in FIG. 25.

[0111] In addition, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that many other multi-layer win evaluation methods are possible within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, a "Z" overlaid symbol matching a base layer symbol may provide a free game and/or some other prize. One or more "Z" overlaid symbols forming a pay line with one or more base layer symbols may provide a free game and/or some other prize. One or

more "Z" overlaid symbols which are substitutes for one or more base layer symbols may provide a free game and/or some other prize. Substitute symbols "stand in" for other symbols according to predefined game rules. For example, a "wild card" symbol may be substituted for any "cherry" symbol. A "Z" overlaid symbol above a special (e.g., animated) base layer symbol may provide a free game and/or some other prize.

[0112] Still further, extended progressive win evaluation methods are possible within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, a "Z" overlaid symbol matching a base layer symbol may indicate a progressive win. A "Z" overlaid symbol may indicate a chance at a progressive win, while the base layer provides the win/loss. The base layer may provide a progressive win, and the "Z" layer may indicate a win multiplier or a progressive game level.

[0113] When a plurality of "Z" levels are presented, additional win evaluation methods are possible within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, a three of a kind win 1606 completely in the "Z" dimension is possible (see FIG. 16). Of course, any number of n-kind wins (e.g., four of a kind, five of a kind, etc.) may be extended in the "Z" dimension. In one embodiment, symbols from different layers may be threaded together to form pay lines.

[0114] Returning to FIG. 19, once the win evaluation is performed, the controller 100 graphically presents the win/loss to the player (block 1952). Depending on the game mode, the graphical display may take on a variety of forms. For example, credits won on each layer and total credits may be displayed separately. Of course, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that many different ways of displaying the win/loss to the player may be used without departing from the scope or spirit of the present invention. Subsequently, the routine 500 exits.

[0115] In summary, persons of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that methods and apparatus for three-dimensional gaming has been provided. Gaming systems implementing the teachings described herein may benefit from new game types, new display modes, and new win evaluation methods which increase player options and interest.

[0116] Numerous modifications and alternative embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. This description is to be construed as illustrative only, and is for the purpose of teaching those skilled in the art the best mode of carrying out the invention. The details of the structure and method may be varied substantially without departing from the spirit of the invention, and the exclusive use of all modifications which come within the scope of the appended claims is reserved.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming apparatus, comprising:

- a display unit that is capable of generating video images;
- a user input device;
- a value input device; and
- a controller operatively coupled to said display unit, said user input device, and said value input device, said